

Marian J. Rubchak (ed.) *New Imaginaries: Youthful Reinvention of Ukraine's Cultural Paradigm*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2015. 330 pp.

One of the unintended effects of the Euromaidan protests which unfolded in Ukraine in late autumn 2013 was an increased interest in Ukraine as an object of academic inquiry. *New Imaginaries* represents a new cross-disciplinary contribution to the scholarly debates examining cultural, political, and social transformations and their causes and effects in post-Soviet Ukraine.

The book is an ambitious project aimed at analyzing and interpreting the political and cultural shifts that taken place in Ukraine since the late Soviet period. All fourteen chapters are written by young Ukrainian women scholars; in this respect, the book represents a powerful postcolonial and feminist attempt at giving voices to researchers from the margins and reducing the distance between the researcher and the researched. The structure and the scope of topics addressed in the book are similar to the previous volume on Ukraine, which was also initiated and edited by Marian J. Rubchak, namely—*Mapping Difference: The Many Faces of Women in Contemporary Ukraine* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011). Both books are collections of essays that explore gender and cultural politics in post-Soviet Ukraine. Along with its precursor, *New Imaginaries* constitutes an insightful and novel approach to understanding Ukrainian society and its complex political history. The book is organized into four thematic parts. As contributors to the volume are from different fields and hold different degrees, *New Imaginaries* surprises with its versatility in topics, methodologies, and genres: along with examples of academic work, the reader finds chapters carried out in a journalistic and more subjective style.

The book opens with an overview of gender and politics in Ukraine: sociologist Tamara Martsenyuk and political scientist Oksana Yarosh focus on the level of women's engagement and (non)participation in politics. Further, feminist philosopher and art theorist Tamara Zlobina reflects on possible strategies for re-politicizing the private sphere. The second part is dedicated to the broad field of media and culture. Anthropologist Tetiana Bulakh,

historian Oksana Kis', and sociologist Tetyana Bureychak present their analyses of the patterns of consumption in contemporary Ukraine and unveil sexist messages in advertising. Media communications scholar Mariya Tytarenko describes women's voices in Ukrainian literary journalism. This chapter has its problematic aspects. The author constantly emphasizes the desire of Ukrainian literary journalists to "unveil the truth" and describe "the real events," and yet makes no move to address the questions of who is in a position to determine the reality of a certain event and whether it is indeed possible to retrospectively unveil the "real truth." Next, drawing on psychoanalytic theory, philosopher and art theorist Tamara Zlobina persuasively examines new strategies for creating female subjectivity that are employed by contemporary Ukrainian women artists. In their contributions to the third part, titled "Changing Demographics," sociologist Viktoriya V. Volodko and international relations scholar Galyna Gorodetska provide a thorough, structured, and in-depth analysis of Ukrainian female labor migration to Western Europe, unveiling the reasons that push women into it and the changing family structures that result from women's long absences from home. Further, human geographer Halyna Labinska surveys changes in the lives of women in the Lviv district; and Lyudmyla Males presents an analysis of contemporary youth's perceptions of traditional family practices. In the final section psychologist Marfa M. Skoryk pinpoints the gender-blindness of Ukrainian psychology and philologist Hanna Chernenko, via a discourse analysis of the long-running journal *Zhinka*, explains the shift from an "egalitarian" to a "patriarchal" family model that occurred in Ukraine in the late 1980s. The book closes with sociologist Tetyana Bureychak's analysis of media representations of "Ukrainian men in crisis"—the crisis here being men's inability to conform to patriarchal norms and expectations.

Despite the fact that all the chapters are executed in a quite readable style, they nevertheless vary when it comes to accessibility and theoretical engagement. Whereas some chapters provide a rather positivist and for the most part purely descriptive account (Martsenyuk, Yarosh, Labinska, Skoryk), some others offer refined and insightful theoretical analysis (Zlobina, Volodko, Gorodetska).

These thematic and methodological disparities contribute from time to time to the impression of the book being something of a patchwork of articles that happen to have been brought together by chance in a single volume. Ambitiously attempting to present a panoramic look at contemporary Ukraine, the final product can seem to lack coherence and consistency at times. On the other hand, due to this very versatility and diversity, the book might be welcomed by quite a broad range of different types of readers.

The theme highlighted in the book time and again is the hope for change in Ukraine—both for political change and for a further shift to greater gender equality. This is no surprise, given that the chapters were written just before the Euromaidan protests started. The book thus might be regarded as a brief summary of the state of affairs in Ukrainian politics and culture before the protests. In this way, *New Imaginaries* not only bids a symbolic adieu to pre-Euromaidan Ukraine but also attempts to point in the direction of necessary changes.

Unfortunately, the book is not without its weaknesses. This reader would have liked to find a more heterogeneous and complex picture of “Ukrainians” and “Ukrainian women,” to whom the contributors often refer. As it stands, at times both “Ukrainians” and “Ukrainian women” loom in the background like a silent mass devoid of agency. In addition, taking into account the fact that Ukraine is a “nation in transition” (to borrow from the editorial introduction to the book) that is struggling to re/construct its past, the book could fruitfully have been enhanced by a thorough analytical engagement with the concept of nationalism and the ways it affects Ukraine’s cultural and political realms.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses and omissions, *New Imaginaries* is a complex and well-researched volume that raises critical questions about the nature of contemporary cultural and political shifts in Ukraine and offers some worthy fresh ideas and views. The book might be of interest to different groups of readers, ranging from those from within Ukraine, who might want to look at themselves through the looking glass, to scholars and journalists who have a professional interest in the country or are just seeking a

short but thorough summary of the local cultural and political landscapes.

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Russell Scott Valentino, *The Woman in the Window: Commerce, Consensual Fantasy, and the Quest for Masculine Virtue in the Russian Novel*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2014. xiii, 170 pp.

This ambitious book by Russell Scott Valentino aims to explore “the sheen of virtue, its rhetorical construction in some three hundred years of European expression, and its eventual displacement by the commercial ethic” (2). A literary scholar by training, Valentino treats his topic primarily through incisive new readings of novels by Nikolai Gogol’, Fedor Dostoevskii, Lev Tolstoi, Boris Pasternak and Vladimir Nabokov. Yet his wide-ranging approach also situates these writers in a much broader investigation of how global modernization and economic transformation have reshaped notions of virtue, a study that stretches all the way from Plato’s *Republic* in Ancient Greece to Don DeLillo’s *Cosmopolis* in the postmodern USA.

Valentino transverses this grand historical sweep even in his introduction, as he provides a fascinating meditation on the evolving meaning of *virtue* and *virtual*. Moving beyond the usual observation that the Latin *virtus* has its roots in *vir* (man), Valentino suggests that *virtus* referred not merely to “manly strength” or “power over other bodies,” but rather to “mastery over one’s own [body]” (3), and that the concept soon came to encompass good character as well. He convincingly argues that such ideas of virtue were transformed by the financial revolution of the late 1600s and early 1700s, which began in Europe, but had spread to Russia by the mid to late 1800s. This period, Valentino suggests, saw the “decline of the heroic ethic amid the spread of the commercial one” (90). Whereas older conceptions of masculine virtue were bound up with tangible things—men’s own bodies and their behavior—the financial revolution instead ascribed value to such intangibles as